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2_12_13 Minutes

Park and Recreation Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, February 12, 2013 @ 7:00 PM
Approved

The Park and Recreation Commission came to order at 7:00 PM on the first floor of the Arlington Senior Center on Tuesday, February 12, 2013.

Members in attendance included: Leslie Mayer, Shirley Canniff, Don Vitters, Jen Rothenberg and Jim Robillard. Also in attendance was Director of Recreation Joseph Connelly.

Members of the public included Mark Edry, Peter Fuller, Michael McCabe, Mustafa Varoglu and Brian Murray.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Canniff motioned to approve, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg and approved 5-0.

Open Forum – Public Comments

No public comments.

Florence Avenue Playground Design Review

Representatives from CBA Architects presented two site plans for the Florence Avenue Playground.

The two major changes on both plans consist of adding another bay of swings and elimination of the grassy spacing between the zip line and play area.

The first plan shows the swings separate from the play area in the area that currently has the outdated tot play equipment. This plan would require rebuilding the retaining wall. On the second plan the swings are moved closer to the new play equipment near the sandbox. In this plan, the hill area would be graded into a gentle slope and would not require a retaining wall. This would be left as a grassy area for more passive activities.

There was discussion about the style, height and amount of fencing needed and whether the fencing should be installed so that the trees are inside the playground area or on the outside of the fence. It was stated that the fence should be at least 4ft in height to act as a safety barrier, as required by state policy. Various fencing materials were discussed. Black vinyl chain link, while the standard material generally used, is not viewed as attractive by neighbors, who would prefer an upgrade of material if pricing allows.

Some additional suggestions from the public were to make the gate look nicer, as well as widen and beautify the entry path. The entrance should have some landscaping.

The general consensus of the public and the Commission was to go with the second plan, where the swings are closer to the playground area and to install the fence between the trees and the play area. Add Alternate No. 1 will be the splash pad. Add Alternate No. 2 will be the repair of the chain link backstop and Add Alternate No. 3 will be upgraded fencing materials.

Ms. Canniff motioned to approve, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg and approved 5-0.

Robbins Farm Sledding – Oakes Plimpton Sign Request

Oakes Plimpton was unable to make the meeting. He wants to post signage at the Robbins Farm warning parents and kids that snowtubes are dangerous.

This is not recommended per Town Counsel. There is an assumption of risk that goes along with sledding. Ms. Mayer had a copy of the Town By-law regarding signage in public parks that states that approval is required to post any sign. Oakes will be asked to remove the signage. Mr. Connelly will respond to Oakes, and Ms. Mayer will send along a copy of the by-law to him.

Jr. Trojans Field Request – Brian Murray

The Jr. Trojans are expanding to four teams. Mr. Murray is requesting the use of Robbins Farm, Arlington High School, Spy Pond and Summer Street on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 8:00AM to 12:00PM. Mr. Murray is committed to bringing players who are playing baseball outside of Arlington back home to Arlington.

Mr. Murray would like a cooperative effort to share the use of fields with Babe Ruth. Mr. Robillard stated that Babe Ruth needs a certain level of flexibility with scheduling for practice times and make-up games.

Ms. Mayer is concerned that the expansion is limited to boys' teams and feels that there should be more opportunity for girls' teams. Mr. Murray stated that next year he is putting together a girl's softball team.

When the pilot was approved last year, the Commission was under the assumption that there was only going to be one team. Mr. Murray stated that there was only one scheduling conflict with Babe Ruth this past season and he feels that scheduling for the additional teams can be worked out.

Mr. Connelly will schedule a meeting with Mr. Robillard and Brian Murray to go over scheduling. Mr. Connelly also will look into some scheduling software. The Commission voted on approving the concept of allowing the expansion provided the details can be worked out and will be presented later.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve, seconded by Ms. Canniff and approved 4-1. (Mr. Robillard opposed.)

Spy Pond Warrant Article Review

The Arlington Land Trust has put an article into the warrant and asking support in trying to figure out how to protect public land with the ultimate vision to create a walking path around Spy Pond. The warrant article will transfer certain parcels of land bordering Spy Pond to the Conservation Commission. Over the years, people with waterfront property have been building gardens on lands down to the water and then fencing off access. Spy Pond is a "great pond" and state law provides for public access. Mr. Vitters asked what constitutes public access.

According to the chair of the Conservation Commission, the goal of the current article is to put the vacant land at the end of Addison St., which is owned by the Town, under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission. The Commission feels the warrant article is overly vague and subjects itself to much speculation.

Ms. Mayer will talk to proponents of the article and get more information.

Park Bylaws by Other Properties

This article was filed to initiate local discussions about current state and local regulations and laws/bylaws applicable to firearms. The article uses the bylaws related to use of areas under the control of the Park Department regarding prohibited activities in/on park property as a template upon which other authorities will hopefully discuss and consider adopting similar language. There is no action required of the Park & Recreation Commission on this article.

Capital Improvement Update

Buck Field Renovation – No change.

Poets Corner Master Plan – Mr. Connelly will review the geotechnical plan at the next meeting.

Summer Street Field Netting – Mr. Connelly has Heimlich pricing the pilot installation.

Capital Request for FY 2014 – No changes.

Off-Leash Dog Review

Mr. Connelly received a complaint from Ellen Reed, a property owner abutting Menotomy Rocks Park. Dogs continue to enter her yard at various times of day; dogs are not under voice control; and owners are not picking up after their dogs. Mr. Varoglu also reports that people are not abiding by the posted off-leash rules at Menotomy. He would like to see a long-range road map. The Commission discussed reviving talks about creating a new park ranger position to deal with these and other park issues. Mr. Connelly will put a discussion of the park ranger concept on a future month's agenda.

Special Requests

Joe Hart is requesting Peirce freshmen baseball field for the Trojans instead of Summer Street Field. Mr. Connelly is scheduling this, and the Commission agrees that this is a better fit for the team.

Rink and Recreation Update

Belmont Hill School Sports Flooring Donation - Mr. Connelly sent a letter to George Tahan thanking him for their generosity. The flooring will be available sometime in March or April and will be stored in a trailer until it can be installed and when it's not in use.

Committee Updates:

Portable Restrooms – There has been little change from last year.

Friends of Parks – N/A

Skateboard Park – N/A

Mill Brook Linear Park – N/A

Other Business

Some Information on Ecofest and Platform Tennis was handed out in the meeting packet for review.

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:
Joseph Connelly, Director of Recreation